

## The Vampire 115

### Chapter 115 115: Battle On The Ice

"Save our trophy for last, kill the rest!"

The words pierced Hauke's heart like a knife. This was his fault. He'd just started to feel the barriers between them beginning to melt as they celebrated catching an enormous sturgeon when the Tuscans hurled stones shattered everything around them. They were going to kill his new friends, just to get to him.

A second behind that thought, however, his panicked mind processed the other thing the Tuscan leader had said. 'Old man Paulus didn't lie.' The Tuscans had come for him, yes, but it wasn't his fault. Elder Paulus had sold them out. The realization chilled his heart, bringing an icy calm to him as his fear vanished, replaced by a cold, crystalline rage.

"Hauke," Virve, said, watching the young Frost Walker struggle to process what was happening. "Can you hurl spears of ice, or do anything else to break up their group? We can't fight them all at once or we'll be overwhelmed."

"I can," Hauke said. "Shatter. Windstorm. Ice Blades," he intoned, gathering a mixture of pale white and icy blue energy to his horn before forcefully making a fist as though he was crushing something in his hand. The next instant, the remainder of the icy dome shattered, transforming from a simple shelter into hundreds of blades of ice, each one as sharp as shards of broken glass.

The frigid wind changed directions, swirling around Hauke and his companions before rushing at the Tuscans and carrying the shards of ice with it.

Rather than scatter at the rushing shards, however, the Tuscans clustered behind the man with the heavy chain who began to spin it rapidly in front of them like a shield. Ice shattered as the heavy iron links smashed through the wind born blades of ice but it stopped dozens, it couldn't stop hundreds of ice shards.

Dozens of the ice shards that made it past the spinning chain missed the Tuscans entirely, breaking against the frozen surface of the lake. Still others delivered only glancing blows to the Tuscan's pelt-covered torsos or were deflected by the weapons they raised to protect their heads and faces from the storm of shards.

But none of the Tuscans came through the storm unscathed. Several shards of ice pierced the thick hair and tough hides of their exposed arms and even more tore at their floppy ears. Blood began to flow from dozens of small wounds before Hauke's spell ran out of icy shards to throw.

While the Tuscans paused their advance to deal with the sudden ice storm, Virve and Andrus didn't stay still. Using all of his natural advantages, Andrus dashed out from behind cover, sprinting as fast as his cloven-hoofed legs would carry him, with Virve charging not far behind him.

'Go low, break knees,' had been Virve's command to the horned soldier and he intended to do exactly that, building momentum to deliver a crushing blow to the chain-wielding Tuscan's leg. He didn't have to kill the giant of a man, he wasn't even sure that he could, but if he could cripple one then they could turn the battle into a hit-and-run game of tag that forced the other Tuscans to leave their wounded member behind.

"Stupid brat," the chain-wielding Tuscan sneered, changing the direction of his spinning chain into a wide, flat arc that would shatter or entangle the legs of anyone it struck.

"Clumsy," Andrus taunted, leaping over the lashing chain like it was one of his sisters' skipping ropes. Behind him, Virve paused in her charge to allow the chain to whip in front of her but Andrus charged in directly, zigzagging like a drunken mountain goat rushing down a mountain as he closed on the chain-wielding Tuscan.

-CRUNCH-

The sound of shattering bone echoed across the ice as Andrus's mace found its mark, smashing into the side of the Tuscan's right knee. The giant's leg buckled sideways, unable to support his massive weight, and for a moment, his trunk flailed wildly as he fought to keep his balance.

"Rargh! You insect," the Tuscan shouted, his voice tight with pain as he lashed out at Andrus. The spikes attached to his ivory tusks tore at the horned soldier's padded armor and sent him sliding across the icy surface of the lake, but in his desperation to strike back, the Tuscan's attack failed to draw even a drop of blood.

The next moment, Virve charged into the opening created by Andrus' attack, slamming both hands into the towering giant's abdomen. On her hands, she wore sturdy darksteel gauntlets, and her claws were sheathed in inch-long darksteel blades that sliced through the Tuscan's pelts like knives through soft cheese.

As much as she wanted to tear into the Tuscan, spilling his entrails across the ice, she had no time to become mired in close-quarters combat. Instead, she used her momentum and all the power of the muscles in her arms and back to shove the wounded Tuscan at his companions, briefly entangling all of them while she dashed after Andrus to return to Ashlynn's side.

"Well struck," Ashlynn said, clutching her falchion and wishing she could have joined in the charge.

"We should run, Virve said, her brow glistening with sweat and steam pouring from her mouth as she caught her breath after rushing back from her charge. "Before..."

"Kill them!" Imnek, the lead Tuscan shouted, abandoning their steady advance to charge at Hauke's protectors.

Paulus had told him to be cautious of the human witch who had demonstrated extraordinary strength to take down his grandson Torsten but at this point, Imnek hadn't seen anything other than a pathetic display of cowering behind ice from the woman and he refused to give Hauke any more opportunities to use sorcery against them.

"Too late," Ashlynn said, her mind spinning rapidly as the Tuscans charged. "Drifting snow," Ashlynn shouted, turning to look at Hauke. "Blind them with a snow flurry, hide us!"

"Geyser. Freeze. Flurry. Fly," Hauke intoned, summoning an explosive fountain of water from the hole in the ice where they'd been fishing. In a flash, the geyser of water produced a cloud of droplets that froze into soft, slushy snowflakes before a gust of wind flung them at the faces of the charging Tuscans.

The Tuscans' trunks shot upward, releasing powerful blasts of air that momentarily parted the cloud of snow like curtains. But for every snowflake they blew away, a dozen more swirled in to take its place. Within moments, they'd become nearly completely engulfed in the flurry of slushy snowflakes that clung to their long hair, dripping in rivulets as it melted under their hot breath before freezing again in icy clumps that obscured their vision even further.

As soon as the snow began to fly, Ashlynn darted out at the charging Tuscans. Andrus and Virve had done their best, but even if she wasn't as skilled as they were, she was much, much faster and stronger than either of them and her darksteel falchion was far more deadly.

At the moment, it didn't matter to her that they were supposed to be protecting her and not the other way around. All she knew was that, as long as she had the strength and the power to help, she couldn't sit idle while others fought.

Now, the Tuscans would learn firsthand what it meant to fight the Seneschal of a True Vampire!